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SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: ABANDONING RAVALOMANANA

Classified By: AMBASSADOR NIELS MARQUARDT FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

11. (C) KEY CONTACTS ARE TELLING THE AMBASSADOR THAT SUPPORT FOR RAVALOMANANA FROM WITHIN THE MILITARY AND HIS OWN GOVERNMENT IS WEAKENING. KEY MINISTERS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO RESIGN THIS MORNING, WHILE THE MILITARY IS LIKELY TO REMAIN ON THE SIDELINES AND LET THE POLITICS PLAY OUT.

12. (C) NAVY CHIEF ADMIRAL ABEL RADAVIDSON CAME BY MY RESIDENCE ON SUNDAY MORNING FOR COFFEE. HAVING CALLED ME ON SATURDAY EVENING RIGHT AFTER THE BLOODBATH, HE REITERATED HIS DEEP CONCERN THAT EVENTS WERE OUT OF CONTROL AND THAT THE PRESIDENT, IN PARTICULAR, "NEEDS TO BE REIGNED IN. HE NEEDS TO CEDE POWER." ON SUNDAY, HE CONVINCINGLY REAFFIRMED THE MILITARY'S DEVOTION TO RESPECTING THE CONSTITUTION WHILE WORKING HARD TO MAINTAIN AND RESTORE ORDER. HE SAID THAT GENERAL LUCIEN, THE RECENTLY APPOINTED ARMY CHIEF, WAS COMMITTED TO "STAYING WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION" AND HAD GREAT OVERSEAS TRAINING ON THE PROPER LINES BETWEEN THE MILITARY AND THEIR CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP. THAT SAID, THEY HAD ALL LOST RESPECT FOR RAVALOMANANA AND HIS IDIOSYNCRASIES AND STRANGE DECISIONS. HE CITED THE RECENT PURCHASE OF A DOLS 60 MILLION PRESIDENTIAL AIRCRAFT, RATHER THEN USING THE MONEY FOR GREATER NATIONAL PRIORITIES; RADAVIDSON SAID HE COULD HAVE BOUGHT AN ENTIRE COAST GUARD FOR THAT PRICE. THE BLOODBATH ON SATURDAY "CROSSED A LINE" FOR MOST MALAGASY AND HE DOUBTED THE PRESIDENT COULD SURVIVE NOW. HE SAID THAT HE IS CONVINCED, AS ARE OTHER SENIOR MILITARY, THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD WHO FIRED ON THE UNARMED CIVILIANS INCLUDED RECENTLY-ADDED FOREIGN SOLDIERS. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT HE HAD IDENTIFIED SOME OF THEM -- SOUTH AFRICANS -- WHEN HE RECENTLY FLEW BACK VIA JOHANNESBURG FROM THE IMO CONFERENCE IN DJIBOUTI. THE DOUBLE INSULT TO THE MILITARY -- ADDING FOREIGNERS TO THE GUARD AND ALLOWING THEM TO KILL UNARMED MALAGASY -- WAS DEEPLY RESENTED WITHIN THE MILITARY, WHO ARE NOW TARNISHED WITH THIS IGNOMINIOUS ACT EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE NOT PART OF THE VIOLENT RESPONSE. HE SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE DEFENSE MINISTER TO BE RESIGNING (WHICH BECAME PUBLIC THIS MORNING).

13. (C) ON MONDAY MORNING ENVIRONMENT MINISTER HARISON RANDRIAMANANA CALLED ME IN A DEEP STATE OF DESPAIR, A CLOSE PRESIDENTIAL INSIDER (INDEED, HE WAS ONE OF THE THREE WHO ENGAGED IN SECRET NEGOTIATIONS ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT), HE SAID HE WAS BEDRIDDEN WITH HYPERTENSION, UNDER DOCTOR'S ORDERS, HIDING IN A FRIEND'S HOUSE, AND READY TO COLLAPSE. HE FORETOLD COMING RESIGNATIONS AND OPENLY DEBATED WHETHER HE TOO SHOULD FOLLOW SUIT. HE WAS RELUCTANT TO RESIGN, HE SAID, ONLY BECAUSE HE DID NOT WANT TO GIVE MOMENTUM TO THE MAYOR'S TEAM, WITH WHOM HE WAS FURIOUS AND DISGUSTED. "THEY LIED TO US ON FRIDAY: THEY PROMISED THEY WOULD MAKE THEIR ANNOUNCEMENTS BUT NOT ADVANCE ON THE PALACE. THEN THEY DID., IT WAS INTENTIONAL." HE DEBATED ALOUD WHETHER THERE WAS ANYTHING THE PRESIDENT CAN STILL DO TO HOLD POWER: DISSOLVE THE GOVERNMENT, APPOINT A POWERFUL COTIER PRIME MINISTER, CANCEL THE AU SUMMIT, ETC? HE OBSERVED THAT "RAVALOMANANA IS LISTENING TO NO ONE." HE CONFIRMED THE ARREST WARRANT FOR THE MAYOR AND OPINED THAT IT WOULD JUST ENVENIMATE THE SITUATION FURTHER (A POINT

RADDAVIDSON ALSO MADE).

14. (C) A DESPONDANT ECONOMICS MINISTER IVOHASINA RAZAFIMAHEFA ALSO CAME BY ON SATURDAY TO DISCUSS HIS CONCERNS. HE ALSO SAID HE WAS READY TO RESIGN, IF THAT WOULD HELP MATTERS, BUT HE WAS NOT DECIDED. HE SAID THAT ALL MINISTERS ARE LIVING IN FEAR, AFRAID FOR THEIR AND THEIR FAMILIES' LIVES, AND DO NOT FEEL SUPPORTED BY THE PRESIDENT, WHO REMAINS LARGELY ISOLATED. HE WANTED TO UNDERSTAND STATEMENTS I AND THE EUROPEAN UNION HAD MADE ON FRIDAY, IN WHICH WE ACKNOWLEDGED SOME OF THE LEGITIMATE CONCERNS OF THE MALAGASY PEOPLE AND IN WHICH THE EU DISCLOSED PUBLICLY FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT CERTAIN ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS HAD BEEN SUSPENDED BY THOSE PROVIDING DIRECT BUDGET SUPPORT, OUT OF CONCERN FOR GOVERNANCE ISSUES. HE LEFT UNDERSTANDING THAT, FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, IT WAS NO LONGER "BUSINESS AS USUAL" IN OUR RELATIONS WITH THE GOM. HE SAID IT WAS UNCLEAR, HOWEVER, WHETHER THAT MESSAGE WAS REACHING THE PRESIDENT.

MARQUARDT